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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAMAKO 000624

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SUBJECT: NEGOTIATING THE NEGOTIATIONS: ALGERIA PRIMES
MALIANS AND TUAREG REBELS FOR TALKS

REF: A. BAMAKO 00567
[1](#)B. BAMAKO 00305
[1](#)C. BAMAKO 00482

Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson, Embassy Bamako, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) Summary: A Malian delegation led by Minister of Territorial Administration, General Kafougouna Kone, returned to Bamako on July 1 after a three-day visit to Algiers. General Kone's trip followed meetings between Algerian officials and Tuareg rebels. Tuareg contacts indicate that the Algerians succeeded in convincing Tuareg rebel leaders to realign themselves within the framework of the Alliance for Democracy and Change (ADC). During this first round of negotiations, the Algerians kept the Malian and Tuareg delegations in their respective corners with the Algerian Ambassador to Mali serving as the main go-between. The Algerian Ambassador returned to Bamako with Minister Kone to meet with President Amadou Toumani Toure and prepare for the second round of negotiations, which would presumably entail direct talks between General Kone and Tuareg rebels in Algiers in July. Tuareg leaders are currently on stand-by in Tamanrasset in southern Algeria. End Summary.

2.(C) On July 1 Minister of Territorial Administration, General Kafougouna Kone, completed a three day trip to Algiers to prepare for upcoming negotiations with Tuareg rebels. Minister Kone traveled to Algiers on June 28 with Police Inspector General and Chair of the Kidal Accords oversight committee Mahamadou Diagouraga. Rhissa ag Sidi Mohamed, a Tuareg belonging to the Chamanamas tribe who was the Secretary General of the Front for the Liberation of the Azawad (FPLA) during Mali's 1991-1996 rebellion, also traveled with Kone.

3.(C) Minister Kone met only with Algerian officials and arrived in Algiers just as the delegation of Tuareg rebels, which traveled to Algiers in mid-June (Ref. A), departed for Tamanrasset. The Tuareg delegation apparently met with many of the same Algerian officials as Kone and reflected a balance between rebels loyal to Ibrahim Bahanga and those belonging to the Alliance for Democracy and Change (ADC). Delegation members aligned with Bahanga included Hassan Fagaga, Bahanga's father-in-law and Northern Mali Tuareg Alliance for Change (ATNMC) spokesman Hama ag Sid'Ahmed, Mohamed ag Aharib and Hamma Moussa. All of these but Hamma Moussa belong to the Ifergoumessen fraction of the Kidal Ifoghas tribe. Representing the ADC were ADC spokesman Ahmada ag Bibi, Kidal Chamber of Commerce president Abdoussalam ag Assalat and ADC Commandant Ada ag Massamad. Tuareg leaders included Eghless ag Oufene, the mastermind of the ill-planned March 26 attack against the Malian military post in Aguelhok (Ref. B), in the delegation at the last moment before leaving Kidal.

4.(C) According to Presidential advisor Mohamed ag Acherif, who happened to be on vacation in Algiers and met with the Tuareg delegation, the Algerian Ambassador to Mali prevailed on Tuareg leaders to realign themselves behind the ADC banner. Acherif said his understanding was that while Ahmada ag Bibi would retain his title as ADC spokesperson, Bahanga and ADC president Iyad ag Ghali would assume the key decision-making roles. Ag Ghali is currently assigned to the Malian consulate in Djeddah, Saudi Arabia. Acherif said the Algerian Ambassador to Mali was particularly sharp with Bahanga's Paris-based father-in-law ag Sid'Ahmed who, as the self-appointed spokesman of the ATNMC, has a habit of issuing dubious press statements. The Algerian Ambassador reportedly instructed ag Sid'Ahmed to restrain himself from drafting any more statements for the international press and diplomatic corps.

5.(C) Ag Acherif said the Algerian Ambassador returned to Bamako with Minister Kone to help accelerate the pace of subsequent consultations with President Amadou Toumani Toure. The Algerians apparently hope to facilitate a direct meeting between the Malians and Tuareg rebels in Algiers in July. Tuaregs interpreted former Tuareg rebel Rhissa ag Sidi Mohamed's presence within the Malian delegation as a not-so-subtle attempt by the Malians to weaken Tuareg unity. Ag Sidi Mohamed is a member of the Chamanamas tribe. The Malians have used some Chamanamas and Tuareg Imghads led by Col. Elhadj Gamou to counter Bahanga and the largely Ifoghas dominated ADC (Ref. C). Ag Acherif said that the Tuareg delegation intended to make no demands beyond those already

BAMAKO 00000624 002 OF 002

inscribed in the Algiers Accords. He did note, however, that the rebels would ask the Malians to recall Col. Gamou and disband his para-military units. The Tuaregs have also asked Algeria to resume shipments of food for rebel combatants which were apparently begun following the May 23, 2006, attacks and halted sometime thereafter.

6.(C) Comment: Algeria's apparent success in merging, however delicately, all of the main Tuareg rebel factions is encouraging. The Algerian Ambassador to Mali's personal involvement in separate discussions with both Tuaregs and Malian officials is also a good sign. The real challenge, however, is likely yet to come when Algeria attempts to bring the two sides together for direct negotiations in Algiers.
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